

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUANDA 00182 01 OF 02 141330Z

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3258

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LUANDA 0182

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI AO CG

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER

1. SUMMARY. DURING AMBASSADOR HINTON'S CONSULTATION IN LUANDA WE CALLED ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, GENERAL ANTONIO DA SILVA CARDOSO, WHO SAID ELECTIONS MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE AND WHO WAS GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INEVITABILITY OF CIVIL WAR IF DANIEL CHIPENDA WENT OVER TO THE FNLA. CARDOSO ASKED THE AMBASSADOR TO INTERCEDE WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU TO PREVENT SUCH AN ALLIANCE. THE AMBASSADOR PROMISED TO CONSIDER THE MATTER, BUT SAID HE THOUGHT CARDOSO OVERESTIMATED U.S. INFLUENCE. END SUMMARY

2. ON FEBRUARY 13 AMBASSADOR HINTON AND I CALLED ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER. THE FORCES OF DANIEL CHIPENDA AND NETO HAD ENGAGED IN A PREDAWN FIREFIGHT AT CHIPENDA HEADQUARTERS IN WHICH ONE PERSON WAS KILLED AND WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE PALACE CARDOSO WAS CLOSETED WITH MPLA PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL MEMBER LOPO DE NASCIMENTO.

3. WITHOUT PAUSING TO EXCHANGE PLEASANTRIES THE HIGH COMMISSIONER DECLARED THAT THE MOST CRUCIAL ELEMENT ON THE ANGOLAN SCENE NOW IS DANIEL CHIPENDA; IF CHIPENDA ALLIES HIMSELF WITH FNLA, THERE WILL BE A CIVIL WAR. AS CARDOSO SEES IT, THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR A PEACEFUL TRANSITION IS TO MAINTAIN A ROUGH BALANCE OF

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LUANDA 00182 01 OF 02 141330Z

MILITARY FORCES. IF CHIPENDA SWINGS HIS 2,000 TO 3,000 TROOPS

TO FNLA, HOLDEN ROBERTO WILL NO LONGER BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE AND COMPROMISE, BUT WILL ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE HIS WILL. THE REACTION FROM MPLA WILL BE SWIFT AND BLOODY. THERE IS NO CHANCE, HE SAID, THAT FNLA CAN CONTROL ANGOLA BELOW THE CUANZA RIVER, WHICH IS SAVIMBI TERRITORY, AND WILL NOT EVEN TRY. CARDOSO SAID THAT MUCH THE SOLUTION TO THE CHIPENDA PROBLEM IS TO SPLIT HIS FORCES AMONG MPLA AND UNITA. HE RECOGNIZED THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO WORK OUT; SAVIMBI, FOR INSTANCE, WOULD NOT TAKE ANY CHIPENDA ELEMENTS UNDER HIS WING WITHOUT THE EXPRESS CONSENT OF NETO.

4. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ASKED THE AMBASSADOR TO USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH MOBUTU TO BLOCK A CHIPENDA/FNLA MERGER. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE DIDN'T THINK HIS VIEWS WOULD HAVE MUCH AFFECT ON MOBUTU, WHO IS GOING TO GREAT LENGTHS TO SHOW HIS INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES, CARDOSO SHOOK OFF THE EXPLANATION BY SAYING THAT MOBUTU NEEDS THE U.S. AND WILL RESPOND TO OUR PRESSURES. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED FURTHER THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME THE INFLUENCE ON MOBUTU IN FNLA MATTERS IS EXERCISED BY THE CHINESE, NORTH KOREANS, AND PERHAPS RUMANIANS, ALL OF WHOM HAVE OR WILL SUPPLY ARMS, AND, IN THE CASE OF THE CHINESE, TRAINING. CARDOSO SAID MOBUTU SHOULD BE TOLD THAT A CIVIL WAR IN ANGOLA WOULD DESTABILIZE THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE. WHEN AMBASSADOR HINTON ASKED HOW, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER REPLIED THAT THE VERY EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE REPRESENTED BY THE EX-KATANGAN GENDARMES COULD VERY WELL BECOME THE NUCLEUS OF AN INVADING ARMY. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ADDED THAT AS HE HAD PROMISED MOBUTU HE WOULD DO, HE IS DISARMING THESE "COMMANDOS" BUT ARMS, HE EMPHASIZED, ARE READILY AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT ANGOLA. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ADDD THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO GO TO KINSHASA HIMSELF TO TALK WITH MOBUTU, HOLDEN ROBERTO AND OTHERS, WHOM HE KNOWS, BUT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE HE CAN DO SO NOW THAT HE IS HIGH COMMISSIONER. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THE TELEPHONE, BUT CARDOSO DOUBTED LISBON WOULD GIVE ITS APPROVAL EVEN TO THAT AT THIS TIME, BUT MIGHT DO SO LATER.

5. CARDOSO RETURNED ON TWO OR THREE OCCASIONS DURING THE CONVERSATION TO THE NEED FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO TALK WITH MOBUTU, AT ONE POINT HE FORMULATED FOR US THE CONCEPT OF AN ANGOLA OF EVEN MORE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE THAN VIET NAM, WHERE, HE SAID,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 LUANDA 00182 01 OF 02 141330Z

FORTY THOUSAND AMERICAN DIED. AMBASSADOR HINTON DISMISSED THE NOTION OF U.S. INTERVENTION AND TOLD CARDOSO THAT NOT ONLY IS AMERICA IN NO MOOD FOR FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION, BUT THAT NEITHER ZAIRE NOR ANGOLA IS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT. CARDOSO REMAINED UNCONVINCED, AS HE HAS KN PREVIOUS OCCASIONS WHEN THE SUBJECT OF ANGOLA'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES HAS COME UP.

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PAGE 01 LUANDA 00182 02 OF 02 141351Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3259

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 LUANDA 0182

6. AS FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS PROSPECTS, CARDOSO SAID THAT MPLA AND FNLA ARE COOPERATING, BUT THERE THERE IS FRICTION BETWEEN THEM AT THE CABINET LEVEL. HE HAS INSISTED THEY WORK TOGETHER AND SO FAR THEY HAVE COMPLIED. NEVERTHELESS, HE SEES NO CHANCE THAT THE AGREED UPON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD BEFORE INDEPENDENCE; THE WHOLE PROCESS IS EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND TIME CONSUMING AND IN A COUNTRY WITH NO HISTORY OF ELECTIONS IT WOULD APPEAR IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS WITHIN NINE MONTHS. AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO ELECTIONS CARDOSO SEES AN AGREEMENT BEFORE INDEPENDENCE ON A COALITION GOVERNMENT. HE DOES NOT THINK SAVIMBI WILL WANT TO TOP JOB IN SUCH A COALITION. AT THE MOMENT SAVIMBI IS WORKING HARD TO BUILD POPULAR SUPPORT, OR, AS HE PUTS IT, TO "MOBILIZE THE MASSES". CARDOSO SAID THAT IF HOLDEN ROBERTO TOOK ON THE PRESIDENCY HE WOULD BURNED AND OUT WITHIN A VERY SHORT PERIOD. HE ASKED THE AMBASSADOR IF HE THOUGHT ROBERTO WOULD COME TO ANGOLA; HE HOPED SO AS IT WOULD HELP EASE THE PRESENT TENSE SITUATION. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT ROBERTO HAD TOLD HIM HE HAD NO PLANS TO COME DOWN IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

7. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE MPLA. AGOSTINHO NETO'S ARRIVAL ON FEBRUARY FOUR MAY HAVE BEEN INDICATIVE OF A GENERAL LACK OF ENTHUSIASM IN LUANDA FOR NETO. THE CROWD AT THE AIRPORT, ALTHOUGH LARGE, DID NOT NEARLY MEASURE UP TO THE MASSIVE TURNOUT THE PARTY WANTED.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 LUANDA 00182 02 OF 02 141351Z

SINCE HIS ARRIVAL NETO HAS BEEN STAYING WITH PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL MEMBER LOPO DE NASCIMENTO IN A HOUSE PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR NASCIMENTO. ACCORDING TO CARDOSO, NETO COMES AND GOES WITHOUT ANY SHOW OF AFFECTION OR INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE PUBLIC. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER BELIEVES THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE ANDRADE FACTION (REVOLTA ACTIVA) TOWARD NETO WILL HAVE A GOOD DEAL OF INFLUENCE ON HIS HOLD OVER THE PARTY MACHINERY AND THE FAITHFUL.

8. MPLA DOES HAVE A LOT OF ARMS, SAID CARDOSO, WHICH HAVE BEEN COMING IN SINCE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER. HE SAID THAT WHILE AT THE AIRPORT RECENTLY HE NOTICED A DAKOTA ON THE APRON. HE ORDERED IT OPENED OUT OF CURIOSITY AND FOUND CASES OF MACHINE GUNS, MORTARS AND BAZOOKAS, WHICH WERE SEIZED. THE DAKOTA HAD COME FROM CABINDA. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THEORIZED THAT THE WEAPONS ARE SMUGGLED INTO CABINDA FROM CONGO BRAZZAVILLE AND THENCE TO LUANDA. WITH RESPECT TO MPLA MILITARY CAPABILITY, HE SAID THAT A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF BLACKS RECENTLY DISCHARGED FROM THE PORTUGUESE ARMY HAVE ENLISTED IN THE MPLA ARMY.

9. AS WE WERE LEAVING, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER REITERATED HIS REQUEST THAT THE AMBASSADOR TALK WITH MOBUTU. HINTON SAID HE WOULD GIVE THE MATTER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD ME HE DOES NOT PLAN TO ASK MOBUTU FOR AN AUDIENCE TO DISCUSS THE CHIPENDA QUESTION. IF AN APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY ARISES, HE WILL PASS ON TO MOBUTU THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S CONCERN.

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